D9 Centre for Native Ed.

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Pre-release for 5 :00 p.m. event

Government of Canada and IBM Canada Ltd. join forces with NAEP

http://www.nativeaccess.com/
http://www.dream-catching.com/

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY'S NATIVE ACCESS TO ENGINEERING PROGRAM (NAEP) TO PROVIDE E-LEARNING TO CANADA'S ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

MONTRÉAL /February 7, 2001 – Concordia University's Native Access to Engineering Program will soon be providing its curriculum online to Aboriginal communities across Canada. This project brings together Concordia, the Government of Canada and IBM Canada Ltd. , in a joint effort to expand the base of NAEP users and provide culturally relevant math and science lessons that are related to various fields of engineering. The announcement was made in room **H-767** of the Henry F. Hall Building (**1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. West**) at today's opening reception **(at 5:00 p.m.)** for *DreamCatching 2001: Hands-on, Interactive Math and Science Workshops for Teachers of Aboriginal Students* being held at Concordia from February 7 to 10.

The project came out of a feasibility study prepared for NAEP by IBM Canada Ltd. IBM's performance consultants determined that the content of NAEP's work sheets and newsletters would lend itself well to an electronic format, and could form the basis of a new look and feel for the program's expanded web site.

Championed by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), the NAEP initiative has received financial support from other government and industry partners. "The young, growing Aboriginal population offers tremendous potential, and through partnerships such as this one we are working together to tap into that potential," said Robert Nault, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. "The Government of Canada is committed to helping make a positive difference in the lives of Aboriginal people by supporting strong Aboriginal communities, peoples and economies, as outlined in *Gathering Strength - Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan*." INAC was represented at this event by Deputy Minister Shirley Serafini.

John Wetmore, President and CEO of IBM Canada Ltd. believes his industry has a responsibility to promote and support education. "The dynamic and growing information technology marketplace is driving a demand for a highly skilled workforce. Finding those with the right technology and business skills is a key challenge," he said. "Today's business and community leaders share a responsibility to support key education initiatives to help ensure that all of Canada's youth are fully prepared to compete."

Corinne Mount Pleasant-Jetté, founder of NAEP, believes the benefits are reciprocal. "Canada's role as a world leader in this new millennium is dependent, to a great extent, upon its ability to produce a highly skilled, highly educated work force," she said. "With more than 50% of the Aboriginal population under the age of 18, we must look to this large population of Aboriginal young people as a strong pool of future expertise. They will not only contribute to the building and development of Aboriginal communities, but also to the prosperity of the country as a whole."

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Established in 1993 as a joint undertaking of the Faculty of Engineering & Computer Science and l'Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec, the Native Access to Engineering Program (NAEP) began as a research/action initiative to address the under-representation of Aboriginal people in the engineering profession in Québec. In 1998, the program expanded to the national level. Its mandate is to reach students who are still in high school or elementary school, and whose decisions about careers are ahead of them; to reach their teachers, who are on the front-line in the fight to keep young people in school and provide them with the tools they need for post-secondary education; and to reach parents, elders and community leaders, whose support and understanding children need in order to leave the community for post-secondary institutions and then come home again.

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